

to lift up their heads in joy that redemption was drawing nigh. But here is a "sign" which has the ring of definiteness in it. "The Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations and then shall the end come." Matt. 24:14. Here we have the positive announcement of an event which shall no sooner take place than the "end" so long desired will come. And there are two things which should never be forgotten.

1. There is a human element in this "sign." It is by human instrumentality that this work of evangelization is to be done; and if we earnestly desire Christ's immediate return, we can in a sense "hasten" that coming by carrying the Gospel to "the regions beyond;" for, when once that is done to the extent implied here, then will the end come.

2. The indefiniteness which is necessarily present in the prediction, should discourage all unwise and premature judgment regarding the "times and seasons which the Father hath set within his own authority."

Just how much "preached in the whole world" means, He only knows. This work was begun at Pentecost, and every earnest Christian effort since then has been in the same direction. But the actual spread of the Gospel was greatly checked when the Papal and Moslem counterfeits arose. And tho the missionary spirit was not altogether dead, yet it is only within our own times that the church of Christ has seemed to comprehend the meaning of the Lord's command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation."

During the present century there has been a forward movement in mission work which has seen no parallel. And especially in the last half century has there been an increased interest in the work, and an avowed purpose to give the gospel to "the whole creation." And not many years at the farthest will elapse before every community on the earth will have known the story of the cross. The history of missions in this century is almost like a fairy tale, when we consider the small beginnings and the unprecedented success. (For full particulars of this great work I refer you to the "Encyclopedia of Missions," published by Funk & Wagnalls, New York). The general results may be seen in the following statistics taken from the "American Board Almanac."

There are now 249 missionary societies. The agents of these societies work at 4,694 stations and 15,200 out-stations. Of the missionaries there are 6,042 men and 5,617 women—11,659 in all, and 64,299 native helpers—making 75,958 men and women in this work. As a result of their work, there are now 1,121,699 church communicants and 913,478 persons under special religious instruction. And in 1897 the amount contributed for this work was \$12,988,687.

Tho a vast field is yet unoccupied, the above figures show that this "sign" of Christ's return is specially significant just now. For the first time the gospel is going

everywhere, not to convert "all the nations" but "for a witness" an important difference. The result of gospel preaching is not to convert "all the nations" but "to take out of them a people for his name." This accomplished, "then shall the end come."

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CONGREGATIONAL OR EPISCOPAL

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"Is the Brethren church Congregational or Episcopal in her governments, and what National Conference gave such expression, if given at all?"

I understand Biblical church government, when properly defined, to be Congregational, inter-Congregational and Episcopal. But as popularly defined, accepted and applied in an absolute sense, it is neither, yet partakes largely of all.

Government consists in the proper administration of established law. The term *law* is derived from the old English word *lay*. Biblical law was legislated in heaven by the great Lawgiver of the universe. And laid or placed upon record thru his own mediums, the second and third persons, or powers of the triune God-head and the holy apostles by whom, with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will, the same was confirmed and authenticated beyond the possibility of a doubt.

This law is as universal and immutable as its Author. Therefore is the same to all nations of earth to whom it has been or may be revealed or communicated. "God is no respecter of persons." A proper acceptance and administration of this universal and immutable law constitutes Biblical church government and pertains to the physical and inner, intellectual and spiritual natures of the human race; to the physical in the rites and ceremonies properly administered; to the spiritual in the realization of the attendant blessings and enjoyments of the grace of God appropriated thru the means afforded, having as an outward manifestation the Christ life.

All law must be laid before it can be administered. Biblically, this excludes all mandates, creeds, disciplines, constitutions, confessions of faith, and catechisms; also all ritualistic service or worship that has been, or may yet be, instituted by individuals or councils, ecumenical or otherwise.

Each local congregation, administering the universal and immutable law, is a church of the living God as wholly as if no other existed; therefore is Congregational in the administration of the law by which she is governed. All local churches that administer this universal law properly constitute the Catholic church (not Roman), but general, universal, the same to and among all the nations of earth.

Having now shown that Biblical church government is Congregational in the administration of the law by which she is governed

I might say that in "expediencies" she is independently congregational. Example: The law of Christian baptism is triune dipping; but the law does not designate the place where the rite shall be administered, whether in a river, creek, mill-dam, pond, lake or baptistery. Hence the local congregation or church, independent of any and all other existing congregations, has the right to choose the most suitable and convenient place as an expediency, "where there is much water." No other congregation has any right to interfere or even raise a question in the matter.

The law says, "ye ought to wash one another's feet." The great law giver does not say you ought to have water out of the river Jordan, or the brook Kedron, or you should or ought to have a linen towel and a wooden pail, or tin basin. "Expediency" says, the most convenient that is appropriate may be used.

The law concerning the Lord's Supper signifies a full meal of lawful, healthy food; the Lord would not accept of any other. The law is neutral in reference to place, time, what kind of a table or dishes to be used (if any). "Expediency" answers again, that which is most convenient and appropriate.

The law of the Holy Communion qualifies Bread and Wine as the proper elements, or emblems, of his body and blood; but the law is as silent as the grave in reference to a special time or place, and as to what kind of a cup, whether tin, copper, brass, silver or gold. The local church or congregation obtains the most expedient and does so independent of any and all other congregations, and no other has any right to interfere or send committees or elders to rule that there must be absolute uniformity in "expediencies."

The law does not require all the Christians in the whole world to meet in one congregation at the same time and place for divine worship; this would be an impossibility; "expediency" says, district, sub-district; organize churches all over the earth; make it as convenient or expedient as possible in order to save our common humanity; let each church be congregational in choosing her officials, in receiving and dismissing members; let her own and control her church property, employ and support her own pastors, "and such like."

Biblical church government is also inter-congregational. "*Inter*, a latin preposition, signifying among or between; used as a prefix." All local churches, administering the universal, immutable law, constitute a universal church, and altho the many congregations be located all over the world, they might meet in one assembly or "Great Congregation" and have communion, "*Inter*," among and between others; inter communion. Two or more local churches may join together, "*inter*," among or between, themselves and transact business, as in the days of the Apostles. (See Ac's, 15 chapter.)